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Memo to all Indonesia, East Timor and West Papua solidarity groups

Lobbying IGGI governments, 1990

Linking aid to human rights

The six executions in Indonesia in October 1989 and February 1990 led to an unprecedented protest movement in Holland. The protests intensified when it was feared that six more longterm political prisoners would be executed in March. [See *TAPOL Bulletin*, No 98, April 1990.] The Dutch government expressed dismay and announced that part of its aid programme for Indonesia would be suspended, thus establishing for the first time the link between economic aid and human rights in its relations with Indonesia. Not all members of the Dutch cabinet agreed with this link being made though it is clear that Pronk's position is strongly supported in Parliament.

On 5 April, the Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation, Jan Pronk (Dutch Labour Party) who is *ex officio* chair of the Inter-Governmental Group on Indonesia (IGGI), left for Indonesia to prepare for this year's IGGI meeting. Shortly before his departure, fears that more executions would take place were renewed when UPI reported that the clemency plea of Asep Suryaman, one of the death-row prisoners, had been turned down by Suharto; the next day Sudomo said on Dutch radio that nothing now stood in the way of his execution. Again the Dutch government protested. Several solidarity groups met Pronk on the day he left for Indonesia. A group of Indonesians started a hunger-strike in the centre of Amsterdam to condemn the executions and call for aid to Indonesia to end.

All these events were prominently reported in the Dutch media, while a larger than usual group of Dutch reporters accompanied Pronk on his trip. The intense publicity in the Dutch press was not marched by coverage in the world's press so we have summarised these developments in the accompanying *Occasional Reports*.

Events during the Pronk visit

Minister Pronk is no advocate of silent diplomacy, as he showed during his visit to Indonesia:

1. He publicly reiterated his concern about the executions and said new efforts would be made by EC member states and other countries to persuade Indonesia not to carry out any more executions. It is understood that a decision on this initiative will be finalised by the Dutch cabinet after Pronk's return home.

2. Pronk met several human rights activists and dissidents. He held discussions with HJC Princen, Director of the Institute for the Defence of Human Rights, and also with members of the newly-established Front for the Defence of Human Rights (Infight), whose statement on the executions

is published in *TAPOL Bulletin* No 98. Pronk promised to circulate documents he received from these groups to IGGI member states.

3. On his return home, Pronk went straight from the airport to see the hunger-strikers and told them that although he had not been given a firm pledge that the executions would not go ahead, he believed the officials he had met understood the strength of feeling on the issue. Amid much publicity the hunger-strikers agreed to end their action.

Lobbying IGGI governments

The high-level campaign in Holland and the Pronk initiative has created more favourable conditions for lobbying IGGI government than have ever existed, opening the way for a sustained campaign in all countries whose governments attend IGGI meeting, to press for a link between aid and human rights. This year's IGGI meeting will take place in The Hague on 12-13 June, which leaves plenty of time for you to lobby your government.

For the first time too, human rights groups in Indonesia are publicly challenging IGGI aid and working along with solidarity groups abroad on the question of aid and human rights.

Please write to your government expressing your support for the efforts being undertaken by the Dutch government and Minister Pronk. Emphasise that Pronk's initiative has pushed human rights onto the IGGI agenda and forced the issue of the execution of political prisoners out into the open for the first time in Indonesia. Urge your government to make strong representations to halt the executions, making it clear that aid programmes will be affected if any more executions take place. We believe it is very important for West Papua and East Timor groups to make these points equally strongly. (Details about the six under immediate threat are given in *TAPOL Bulletin* No 98.)

Other issues should also be raised:

- the deteriorating human rights situation in East Timor,
- the many arrests and harsh sentences in West Papua,
- the arrests of student activists, some of whom have been given totally unwarranted sentences simply for expressing opinions or supporting villagers in land disputes.
- the numerous Muslim trials and outrageous sentences.

Please ask MPs to support your actions or take their own initiatives.

At last the way is open for countries which have supported Indonesia so generously for years to be confronted by human rights issues as an indivisible part of their relationship with Indonesia.

Please keep us informed of the actions you take and the responses you get.

London, 21 April 1990